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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-01 USIA-06 SP-02 /034 W
----------044590 170504Z /11
R 161324Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6064
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BINS, ETEL, BR
SUBJ: IS RADIO AND TELEVISION CENSORSHIP RELAXING?

1. BEGINNING TOWARD THE END OF JANUARY, EMBASSY VIEWERS OF TV NEWSCASTS NOTED FROM TIME TO TIME THAT EVENING NEWSCASTS WHICH HAS PREVIOUSLY FOCUSED WITHOUT EXCEPTION ON ANYTHING BUT POLITICS--SEEMED TO BE DEVELOPING SOME POLITICAL NEWS CONTENT. WE WERE PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED SHORTLY BEFORE CARNIVAL (FEBRUARY 5-8) TO WITNESS SIDE-BY-SIDE INTERVIEWS WITH SENATOR MAGALHAES PINTO AND MDB PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES, BOTH OF WHOM WERE INDEPENDENTLY ASKED ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR MDB
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SUPPORT OF MAGALHAES' CANDIDACY (MAGALHAES SAID HE WOULD WELCOME IT, GUIMARAES WAS CAREFULLY NONCOMMITTAL).

2. ON FEBRUARY 9, O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO COLUMNIST VILASBOAS CORREIA WROTE THAT FEDERAL CENSORS HAD NOT "FOR SOME TIME-TELEPHONE THEIR CUSTOMARY ADMONITIONS AGAINST USING ONE OR ANOTHER NEW ITEM TO RADIO AND TV NEWS DIRECTORS, NOTING THAT THIS DEVELOPMENT

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WAS NOT ONLY "CURIOUSBUT INTRIGUING AND COULD BE SIGNIFICANT
AND EVEN IMPORTANT". ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION OF THIS APPARENT
EASING OF DIRECT RADIO-TV CENSORSHIPN CORREIA SPECULATED,
WAS GOB ASTONISHMENT AT THE WIDESPREAD APATHY WITH WHICH
GENERAL FIGUEREDO'S SELECTION ON JANUARY 5 AS GEISEL'S SUCCESSOR
WAS RECEIVED AMONG THOSE LARGELY ILLITERATE ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION

WHO GET THEIR NEW VIA RADIO AND TV. (SUCCESSION ISSUE, WHILE
WIDELY DISCUSSED IN THE PRESS, WAS PERMITTED MINIMAL RADIO-TV
COVERAGE). ON THE OTHER HAND, CORREIA CAUTIONED, PERHAPS
THE GOVERNMENT IS SIMPLY TESTING RADIO-TV BEHAVIOR PRELIMINARY
TO ANNOUNCING SOME MODIFICATION OF CENSORSHIP AND OF THE
PRESS LAW.

3. PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SECRETARY COL. TOLEDO CAMARGO WAS ASKED
ABOUT THE O ESTADO STORY THE DAY IT APPEARED. HE SAID EVASIVELY
THAT HE "HOPED TO GOD IT IS TRUE," ADDING THAT IT WOULD BE IN
LINE WITH GEISEL'S ULTIMATE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES. A FEW DAYS
LATER, THE FEBRUARY 15 ISSUE OF VEJA NEWS MAGAZINE REPORTED
THAT RADIO AND TV STATIONS HAD NOT BEEN CENSORED SINCE NOVEMBER 10,
1977. VEJA'S REPORT CAUTIONED THAT RADIO AND TV STATIONS ARE OPERATED
AS "GOVERNMENT CONCESSIONS SUBJECT TO INSTANTANEOUS CANCELLATION,"
A CONDITION WHICH MAKES FOR EFFICIENT SELF-CENSORSHIP. AS
O ESTADO'S CORREIA HAD EARLIER, VEJA CONCLUDED, HOWEVER, THAT
SOMETHING PROMISING SEEMED TO BE IN THE WIND.

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4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH PHYSICAL CENSORSHIP HAD BEEN IN EFFECT SINCE
1964, RADIO AND TV STATIONS HAVE SINCE 1968 HHAVE BEEN SUBJECT
TO CENSORSHIP VIA A SIMPLE TELEPHONE CALL FROM AN OFTEN
UNIDENTIFIED CENSOR. ACCORDING TO JORNAL DO BRASIL, RADIO AND
TV STATIONS IN RIO DE JANEIRO RECEIVED 97 SUCH CALLS PROHIBITING
COVERAGE OF AS MANY INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS IN 1973;
103 IN 1974; 16 IN 1975; 7 IN 1976, AND 20 IN 1977. USIS OFFICES
IN RIO AND SAO PAULO, AFTER SPOT CHECKS OF RADIO AND TV
STATIONS IN THOSE CITIES, CONFIRM THAT NO CENSORSHIP CALLS
HAVE BEEN RECIEVED BY THE STATIONS CHECKED SINCE LAST NOVEMBER.
THE STATIONS OBSERVED, HOWEVER THAT SELF-CENSORSHIP WILL
CONTINUE TO BE EFFECTIVE, ESPECIALLY UNTIL STATION
OWNERS AND NEWS DIRECTORS ARE APPRISED OF WHATEVER NEW RULES
THEY MAY BE PERMITTED TO OPERATE UNDER IN THE FUTURE.
CRIMMINS

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NNN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INFORMATION MEDIA, CENSORSHIP
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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ISecure: 1
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Original Previous Classification: n/a
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To: STATE
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